

that keep one up at night wondering what is the right thing to do for the Nation; what is the right thing to do for one's own conscience. We know at the end of the day when we cast that vote, if we go forward people will die. We hope the enemy will be the victims, but we know even under the best of circumstances, innocent Americans will also die. Those votes we think over for a long time.

In the Senate, next to votes on war, votes on Supreme Court Justices reach that same level of gravity and importance. We realize that man or woman we choose to be on the Court is likely to be there after our Senate careers and after we are long forgotten; that those nine people sitting across the street, when five come together, can make decisions that can impact America for generations to come. That is why it is so critically important for us to take a careful review and to take a deliberate approach when it comes to the selection of a Supreme Court Justice.

When the time comes—and I hope it comes soon, maybe within the next week or two—I will be proud to cast a vote in favor of the nomination of Elena Kagan to the Supreme Court. I sincerely hope she receives the bipartisan support she richly deserves.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAUFMAN). The clerk will call the roll. The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT CALENDAR—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, as if in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that at 5 p.m. today, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 815, the nomination of Sharon Johnson Coleman to be a U.S. district judge for the Northern District of Illinois; that debate on the nomination extend until 5:30 p.m., with the time equally divided and controlled between Senators LEAHY and SESSIONS or their designees; that at 5:30 p.m. the Senate proceed to vote on the confirmation of the nomination; that upon confirmation, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Florida is recognized.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. NELSON of Florida pertaining to the introduction of S. 3569 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF SHARON JOHNSON COLEMAN TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Sharon Johnson Coleman, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The deputy leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent, under the pending nomination, to speak under the time allocated to Senator LEAHY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am pleased the Senate is going to vote today on the nomination of Sharon Coleman to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois. We currently have at least five vacancies. She is an amazing, accomplished jurist who will fill one of those vacancies with distinction, I am sure. She has devoted her entire legal career to government service.

She was elected to be Cook County trial court judge in 1996, a campaign where I first met her and her great family. She won retention election in 2002. As a trial judge, she presided over 600 cases that went to verdict.

In 2008, she received promotion. She was elected to the prestigious Illinois Appellate Court. She has a reputation for fairness and impartiality and for having an outstanding judicial temperament.

Not surprisingly, all members of the American Bar Association evaluation committee gave Justice Coleman the highest possible rating of well qualified.

Before tenure on the bench, Justice Coleman served for 4 years as an assistant U.S. attorney in Chicago and for 8 years in the Cook County State Attorney's Office. As Cook County pros-

ecutor, she handled a wide variety of cases—from muggings to murders. She was promoted to be chief of the public interest bureau, where she supervised over 75 attorneys and created a special unit to protect senior citizens from exploitation and abuse.

As additional evidence of her commitment to the legal profession, she served on the boards of numerous bar associations and public interest organizations in the great city of Chicago. She has received many awards for her work, including the prestigious C.F. Stradford Award from the Cook County State Attorney's Office, the Esther Rothstein Award from the Women's Bar Association of Illinois, and a "Women of Excellence" award from the Chicago Defender newspaper. Finally, I note that Justice Coleman was one of the top candidates recommended to me by my bipartisan merit selection committee I established last year to review applications for judgeships in the northern district. This screening committee is chaired by Abner Mikva, who served at the highest levels of government in all three branches. Also, Senator BURRIS has joined me in supporting Justice Coleman.

I hope we can receive a very strong vote for her nomination when it is considered by the Senate in a few moments. The State of Illinois will be very fortunate to have Justice Shirley Coleman to be serving on the Federal bench.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

NASA AUTHORIZATION

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, while we are waiting on other Senators who wish to speak on this judge, I wish to briefly inform the Senate that this coming Thursday, the full Commerce Committee will consider a number of bills that it will mark up. Among them is the authorization bill for NASA.

We are building consensus in what has otherwise been a consensusless position of the future of the manned space program. The President had proposed one thing. He altered that. Different people have different ideas. Different aerospace companies all looking to have a certain part of the manned space program also have their different ideas.

Out of this mix, we are trying to bring together Senators to build a consensus in a bipartisan way; the space program is not only not partisan, it is not even bipartisan. It is nonpartisan—to be able to do this in a fairly unanimous way.

I am happy to report to the Senate that I think we are getting there. I believe what we will have is the essence of the President's proposal. It will still have the continuation of the President's proposal for competition among commercial space companies to deliver not only cargo to the International Space Station, of which the President recommended, and we will certainly